

helping to fight hunger

Expanding Food
Access for Poor
Elderly, Disabled
and Homeless
Americans



More than 42 million Americans receive help from the Supplemental Nutrition and Assistance Program (SNAP)—formerly known as Food Stamps. Nearly one in five of these households includes someone aged 60 or older.

The Restaurant Meals Program provides access to prepared meals for hungry elderly, disabled or homeless SNAP recipients, who don't have the ability or the means to store or cook food for themselves.

Under the Restaurant Meals Program, SNAP recipients who are elderly, disabled or homeless can purchase prepared foods at participating restaurants. To qualify, restaurants must first meet eligibility requirements set by the state. They must be authorized to process electronic SNAP payments. Restaurants cannot charge sales or meal taxes on foods purchased with SNAP benefits and must offer low cost meals to these recipients.

To participate in the Restaurant Meals Program, each state notifies their regional USDA Food and Nutrition Service EBT coordinator. States provide details about enrollment of elderly, disabled and homeless recipients in the program and how restaurant purchases will be monitored.

Benefits of the Restaurant Meal Program also include:

- Improved access to prepared food in urban and rural areas, especially for the elderly, disabled and homeless who don't have kitchens or are not able to prepare or store food for themselves;
- Increased enrollment in SNAP for elderly, disabled and homeless recipients, who have some of the lowest enrollment rates in the nation. Just about a third of eligible seniors are enrolled in SNAP, according to the USDA;
- Increased access to fruit, vegetables, salads, soup, yogurt, low-fat dairy products, grilled meat, chicken and fish, as well as other healthy food options, now found in most restaurants. A new federal menu labeling law also guides consumers to the more nutritious options; and
- Added revenue for cash-strapped states and counties since increasing participation in SNAP provides additional federal matching dollars and incentives.